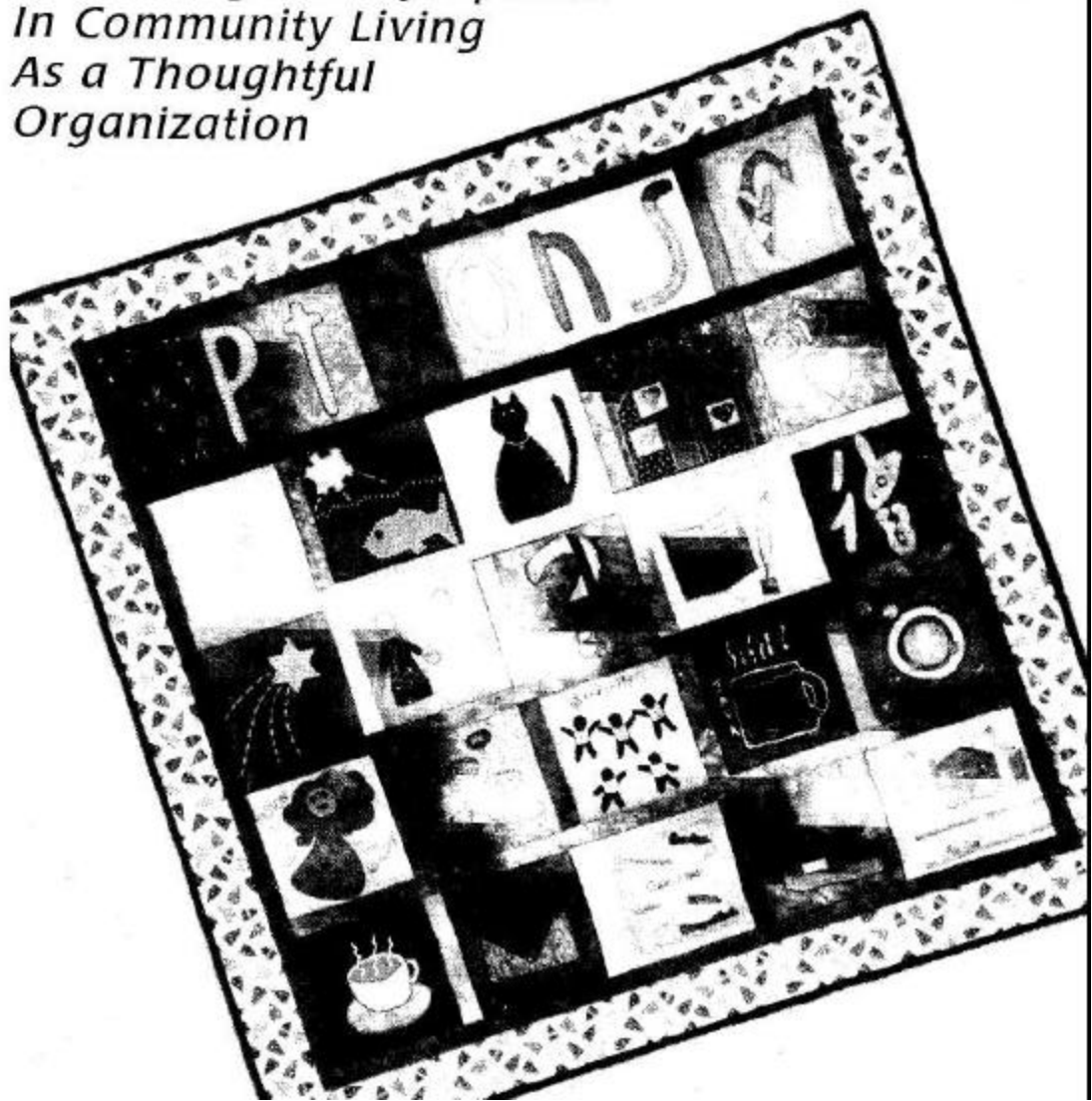


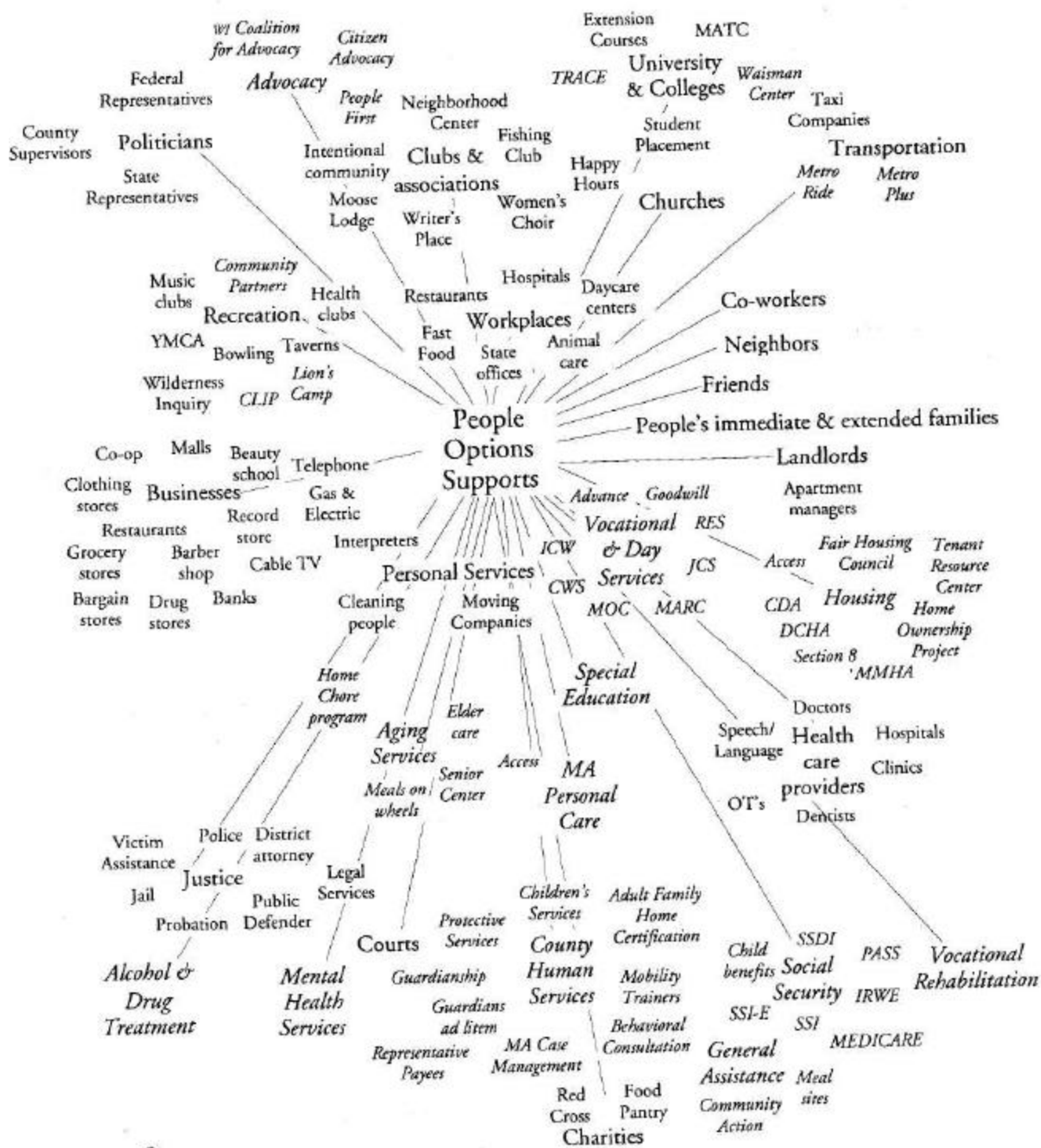
CELEBRATING *the* ORDINARY

*The Emergence of Options
In Community Living
As a Thoughtful
Organization*



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INCLUSION PRESS



Policy on Quality of Life

Introduction

The mission of Options in Community Living is to provide support and coordinate services to enable adults with developmental disabilities to live on their own in small, integrated community settings. The agency works with people to help them make their own choices and reach their own goals, with support available as often and for as long as it is needed.

Because our clients rent their own apartments which are not subject to licensing, any government regulations < agency control, Options felt a responsibility to develop quality of life standards that apply to people who live in apartments or other similar community residences. We maintain that the expectations for quality of life for person with disabilities should be the same as those for other members of the community. Support must then be provide on an individualized basis to help our clients achieve these standards.

The purpose of this document is three-fold. First it serves to provide staff with standards for evaluating an Options' clients well-being and for identifying areas where intervention is needed. Secondly, it provides the ager with guidelines for determining which individuals or groups are best served by this service model. These standards are not intended to be used as entrance criteria, but rather as a general framework for assessing community living needs.

The third purpose is to communicate to our consumers, their families, advocates, and professionals the principles that guide our services. We encourage open dialogue with our consumers and other interested parties about these principles and how they are implemented.

The policy addresses nine major aspects of community living. Each area is divided into two sections. 1) a list of those conditions that we feel must exist to ensure that people are not at risk in the community, and 2) a list of further conditions that Options will actively promote to help its clients achieve a valued lifestyle. It is anticipated that some people will need intensive and long-term support to maintain these standards.

A final comment must be made about the implementation of this policy. We believe that the responsibility for quality of life is shared by service providers, the consumer, and significant others. Options' services are voluntary and we will actively promote, but cannot enforce, these standards. We respect the right of our consumers, with support from their families and advocates, to assume responsibility for their life decisions.

June 1, 1983 Revised June 1, 1998

Autonomy/Choice

Conditions that must exist to ensure that a person will not be at risk in the community:

- The person has opportunities to make decisions and express preferences in all areas of life. The right to make these decisions shall be respected by others in the person's life (e.g. service providers, parents, roommates).
The person also has the right to refuse interventions initiated by the providers.
- The person has a method of expressing preferences and a method of acting upon these preferences in all areas life. For example, a person who has a physical disability and is non-vocal might use a communication board to express preferences and have a personal care attendant to act on those preferences. Preferences can be in a non-verbal ways, such as a change in behavior.
- The person has access to information and experiences that assist the person in making decisions about his/her life.
- The person has people in addition to service providers for support and information needed to make decisions about his/ her life (e.g. family, friends).

Personal Income

Conditions that must exist to ensure that a person will not be at risk in the community:

- The person has a stable source of income that covers basic living needs, including shelter, food, transportation, clothing.
- There is effective management of this income to ensure that basic needs are met. (Support can be provided when needed through a double-signature bank account, representative payee, or assistance with budgeting.)

Conditions that will further promote a valued lifestyle:

- There is sufficient income for items and activities that enrich one's life experience, such as vacations and other leisure activities, home decorations, and items that enhance one's personal appearance.
- The person is able to participate as fully as possible in decision-making about the use of personal income through the development of money and budgeting concepts and values that encourage financial responsibility.
- The person can maximize income through wise investments and purchases, and through subsidies for which the person is eligible.
- The person has a means of earning income through employment as a supplement to or in place of government benefits.

Housing

Conditions that must exist to ensure that a person will not be at risk in the community:

- The person has housing that meets community building codes, is secure and has adequate heat, water and electricity.
- The person has the basic furnishings necessary for daily living, including a bed, chairs, table and lighting.
- The person lives in a neighborhood where s/he feels safe and where there is access to needed resources.

Conditions that will further promote a valued lifestyle:

- The interior and exterior of the home is maintained in a safe, clean and attractive fashion.
- The person is able to exercise control over the home environment, including the choice of location, personalized furnishings and decor and control of temperature and lighting.
- The home furnishings are attractive and complete.
- The person is able to have maximum influence over his/her housing situation through such means as participation in a tenant association, cooperative housing or home ownership.

Physical and Mental Health

Conditions that must exist to ensure that a person will not be at risk in the community:

- The person's health is maintained through adequate nutrition, exercise, safe behavior, medical monitoring, and appropriate medications when needed.
- The person receives prompt and up-to-date treatment for physical and mental health problems.
- The person employs a personal care attendant if his/her physical disability limits the person's ability to provide self-care.

Conditions that will further promote a valued lifestyle:

- The person has established relationships with and easy access to health care providers (e.g. physicians, nurses, dentists, counselors and therapists) that know the person and monitor his/her health needs on an on-going basis.
- The person's lifestyle encourages wellness. For example, the person eats nutritious meals on a regular schedule and maintains an appropriate weight; does not smoke; does not drink in excess or use drugs; has coping mechanisms to relieve stress, has people to provide emotional support.

Safety

Conditions that must exist to ensure that a person will not be at risk in the community:

- Potential dangers in the person's environment are minimized. For example, his/her home is free of fire hazards and is locked and secure; the person does not walk alone on dark streets at night.

- The person receives prompt and appropriate emergency services when needed, such as police, fire department, ambulance, crisis line.

Appearance and Hygiene

Conditions that must exist to ensure that a person will not be at risk in the community:

- The person minimizes health related problems through adequate personal hygiene and clothing choices that are appropriate for weather conditions.
- The person maintains acceptable hygiene and appearance so as not to restrict where s/he can live, work and socialize.

Conditions that will further promote a valued lifestyle:

- The person has a choice of attractive clothing for different occasions.
- The person maintains his/her hair in a manner that is becoming.
- The person's hygiene and appearance serve to enhance self-esteem.

Relating with Others

Conditions that must exist to ensure that a person will not be at risk in the community

- The person has the means to communicate on a daily basis with primary people in his/her life. (This may include speech, signing and adaptive devices.)
- The person has support people, including Options' staff, with whom s/he is able and willing to maintain contact

Conditions that will further promote a valued lifestyle:

- The person has the means of communicating in such a way that encourages interactions with other members of his/her support system and community (e.g., clarity, assertiveness, appropriate affect).
- The person has supportive relationships with family members that encourage independence.
- The person has relationships with friends and peers which provide companionship, intimacy and support.
- The person has the opportunity to responsibly engage in sexual relationships and marriage based on his/her personal beliefs and values.

Meaningful Activities

Conditions that must exist to ensure that a person will not be at risk in the community:

- The person has a daily routine that is designed around his/her needs and capabilities and that resembles as closely as possible a typical adult routine. Such a routine is likely to include vocational, domestic and leisure activities.

Conditions that will further promote a valued lifestyle:

- The person's activities provide opportunities for personal growth and increased life satisfaction.
- The person receives wages for work.
- The person takes part in culturally-valued leisure activities, such as parties, trips, concerts and shows.
- The person's activities take place in community settings that are integrated with non-disabled people.
- The person has the means of developing and achieving short-term and long-term goals (e.g. vocational planning, vacations, retirement).

Mobility

Conditions that must exist to ensure that a person will not be at risk in the community:

- The person has the means to move about his/her home and community environments to the extent necessary to satisfy basic needs.

Conditions that will further promote a valued lifestyle:

- The person has physical access to a wide range of community resources for work, leisure, shopping, etc. Mode of transportation can include bus, car, bike, walking, vehicles equipped for wheelchairs.
- The person, when needed, has adaptive devices that will enhance mobility, such as canes, motorized wheelchair three-wheel bike.

Procedure for Monitoring At-Risk Situations

1. A Quality of Life Checklist will be completed annually as an attachment to the Annual Summary by the Community Support Worker.
2. Any Options' staff member may convene an At Risk Meeting whenever it is felt that a person being supported is at risk in any of the eight quality of life areas. Indicators that a person might be at risk may include the following:
 - The individual is assessed to be at risk according to the quality of life checklist.
 - An acute change in quality of life occurs.
 - Problems in quality of life areas are ongoing and attempts to alleviate them are unsuccessful.
 - Feedback from community members, family or other service providers indicates a concern for a person's well-being.
3. Format of the At Risk Meeting
 - A. Participants
 1. The participants should include the Community Support Worker, the back-up Community Support Worker, another Options' staff person, Options' Program Coordinator, and involved community members, family members, or other service providers.
 2. The person being supported should be included in the meeting unless he or she refuses or it is not in their best interest to attend. If the person being supported does not attend the meeting a strategy should be developed to incorporate the input of the person being supported in the process before a plan is finalized.
 3. Other possible participants: County contract manager, in-home support workers, expert in the area of concern, guardian or advocate, and other team members.
 - B. Content of meeting
 1. Define the problem area and provide background, including:
 - Strategies Options has used to address the problem
 - Barriers encountered
 - Is this an autonomy issue, i.e. is the problem related to the individual making decisions that are putting him/her at risk? If this is the case, review considerations for increased staff direction (attached).
 - Is the problem related to insufficient resources or technology? Is there enough staff support? Is the training component adequate?
 - What is the person telling us about his/her situations? What does he/she want?
 2. Strategies for change
 - Brainstorm possible strategies (opportunities/obstacles). Include: What works for the person? What doesn't work?
 - Determine next steps; remember that final solutions are unlikely to be discovered.
 - Develop a short term (2 month) and long term plan for addressing issue. See Termination Policy for consideration of issues involved. Assign tasks to specific individuals.
 - Schedule follow up meeting(s).
 - A brief written summary of the meeting should be provided to participants and should be placed in the individual's file.

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Considerations for Increased Staff Direction

If a person is making decisions which are putting him/her at risk, the following considerations should be addressed at the at risk meeting to determine whether more staff intrusiveness is justified.

- What is person's history of decision making?
 - previous experience or practice in exercising autonomy and rights
 - quality of past decision making
 - ability to generalize learning from natural consequences of poor decision making
- What are the possible long and short term consequences associated with poor decision making ? (What is the worst that could happen?)
 - exploitation
 - isolation, rejection by others
 - substandard living conditions
 - lack of enriching experiences

What are the possible long and short term consequences of increased direction and control by staff or system

- decreased confidence or self esteem
- likelihood of increased dependence on staff
- improvement in person's quality of life
- possibility of person refusing to work with Options. If this scenario is likely, the following issues should be reviewed:
 - ? Under current circumstances, how is the person benefiting from Options involvement?
 - ? What would be the impact of Options terminating services if the person refuses our increased involvement
 - ? Does the person require protective measures to be taken, i. e. guardianship, protective placement, other

What are the trade-offs of continuing current situation?

Existence of safeguards to protect person's rights

- Is the person sufficiently assertive to advocate for his/her rights?
- Is there the presence of an advocate, friend, or guardian to represent the person's interests? If not, should Options locate such a person?

Should more control and direction be provided? If yes, list proposed interventions.

A Guide to What We Want to Know About People We Support

Autonomy/Choice

What are the person's feelings, preferences, comments about...

- ... opportunities to make decisions and express preferences in all areas of his/her life
- ... other people respecting his/her right to make decisions
- ... methods available to express preferences and ways in which to act on these preferences
- ... having access to information and experiences to assist in making decisions
- ... having people in addition to Options' staff to assist in making decisions

Income

What are the person's feelings, preferences, comments about...

- ... Options' involvement in budgeting/money management
- ... where he/she banks
- ... the amount of money she/he has
- ... the choices and decisions made about how money is spent
- ... changes he/she would like to make in how money is managed

Housing

What are the person's feelings, preferences, comments about...

- ... home
- ... the neighborhood places, i.e., store, laundry, parks, and people
- ... safety in the home/neighborhood
- ... landlord
- ... the furnishings and belongings in his/her home
- ... the choice concerning neighborhood, building and roommate
- ... any changes she/he would like to make in her/his housing

Physical/Mental Health

What are the person's feelings, preferences, comments about...

- ... doctor, dentist and other health care professionals utilized such as OT, PT, etc. (e.g., relationship, responsiveness, accessibility, etc.)
- ... current health status (e.g., weight, nutrition, exercise, smoking, medication) ...
- current mental health status (e.g., happy, depressed, upset, anxious) ... the choices about which doctor or practitioners to use ... any changes he/she would like to make in these health related areas

Safety

What are the person's feelings, preferences, comments about...

- ... safety in the home
- ... knowledge of what to do in an emergency
- ... safety in the community
- ... any changes that would make her/him feel safer

Appearance and Hygiene

What are the person's feelings, preferences, comments about...

- ... the way he/she looks
- ... the way she/he dresses
- ... the choices available about how he/she looks/dresses
- ... any changes she/he would like to make in appearance

Relating With Others

What are the person's feelings, preferences, comments about...

- ... the relationship with family members
- ... friends (e.g., enough friends, a best friend, a boy/girl friend)
- ... sexuality (intimate relationships)
- ... having people to do things with
- ... the choices about who to spend time with
- ... any changes she/he would like to make in personal relationships

Meaningful Activities

What are the person's feelings, preferences, comments about...

- ... job (e.g., the money, the hours, the type of work)
- ... recreational activities in and out of home
- ... choices about work and recreational activities
- ... any changes he/she would like to make in what is done

Mobility

What are the person's feelings, preferences, comments about:

- ... method of transportation
- ... the ability to get to places he/she wants to go
- ... adaptations (e.g. canes, walker, wheelchair, etc.) necessary to facilitate mobility
- ... the transportation choices available
- ... any changes she/he would like to make

Service Provider Issues

What are the person's feelings, preferences, comments about...

- ... attendant, paid roommate or other direct service staff ...
- Options' services (choices about services, how it is provided) ...
- Other services received (e.g., vocational)